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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iraq

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported on, and Yediot and Maariv bannered, an anti-disengagement rally held opposite the Knesset last night, to demand a national referendum or elections. The event, which gathered 130,000-150,000 protesters (250,000, according to the organizers), will continue through tonight. Israel Radio reported on minor arguments between members of the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories and far-right demonstrators, who carried posters comparing PM Sharon with some of the Jewish people's worst tormentors, like Titus and Nebuchadnezzar.

Israel Radio reported that the U.S. administration is satisfied about the relative quiet in the region. Leading media reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is likely to visit Israel next Sunday and Monday. The station reported that Secretary Rice, National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, and Elliott Abrams will hold a meeting today in Washington with Sharon aides Dov Weisglass, Shalom Turjeman, and Maj. Gen. Yoav Galant, as well as Ambassador Danny Ayalon. Jerusalem Post reported that Weisglass is carrying a dual message to Secretary Rice: Abbas is making the right moves, but they are still insufficient to warrant discussions on a permanent agreement. On Sunday, Ha'aretz quoted senior U.S. officials as saying that the CIA is set to resume its role in security coordination between Israel and the PA in an effort to stabilize the situation in the territories.

Israel Radio quoted Palestinian sources as saying that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) will ask Sharon at their meeting to release around 8,000 Palestinian prisoners. The radio cited the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi as saying that Abbas has finalized the makeup of this government, in which PLO representative to the UN Nasser Al-Kidwa will serve as foreign minister. The station reported that Hamas leader Khaled Mashal and Hizbullah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah decided on Sunday to continue their armed struggle against Israel.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel has promised the U.S. that it will reexamine a decision made last summer to confiscate East Jerusalem property owned by Palestinians, who have been cut off from their land by the separation fence. The newspaper quoted GOI sources as saying that Secretary Rice will raise the issue with Weisglass's team today. On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Sharon is expected to have the cabinet approve the amended fence route in Gush Etzion (the Etzion Bloc) before his meeting with Abbas.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post highlighted Sunday's elections in Iraq. The media quoted President Bush as saying that the elections were "a resounding success," while warning that more hard work lay ahead to build a democracy. Yediot's headline: "Historic Day: Democracy Defeated Terror." Over the weekend, the media recounted the stories of Maariv journalist Jackie Hoogie and of Ha'aretz writer Shahar Smoocha, who are of Iraqi origin. They registered and voted at the polling station in Amman. Yediot reported that three Jews of Iraqi origin voted in London.

Maariv reported that following the cease-fire, Israel has erased the name of Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades commander in Jenin Zakaria Zubeidi, as well as other militants, from its list of wanted Palestinians.

Yediot quoted Ramallah sources as saying that Israel will hand over security responsibility for the city of Ramallah on Wednesday. The newspaper cited the GOI's response that the transfer will not take place overnight. Leading media reported that Sharon told Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz at Sunday's cabinet meeting that he should not hurry to hand over control of the cities to the Palestinians before making sure they are prepared to take responsibility. Leading media quoted Mofaz as saying that the number of terrorist attacks has recently dropped by 70 to 75 percent, but that the quiet is fragile. Reporting that Mofaz is scheduled to hold a new meeting with Palestinian security official Muhammad Dahlan today, Israel Radio cited the dissatisfaction in some Palestinian circles at Dahlan's self-appointed role. On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that at a high-level meeting between Israelis and Palestinian officials in Davos, Switzerland, the wide gap between their different visions of the future could not be disguised, as the Palestinians stated their expectations to see the renewal of a bilateral diplomatic process, which would lead to an agreement and an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

Yediot reported that Sharon has instructed his bureau to add substantial compensation to settlers who will be evacuated from their homes. A draft bill on the matter will be ready by Monday.

Ha'aretz reported that Supreme Court President Justice Aharon Barak has issued a temporary injunction prohibiting the Civil Administration in the West Bank from demolishing homes in the village of Wadi al-Rasha, near Qalqilya. The newspaper cited Palestinians claims that Alfei Menashe settlers had pressed to obtain the demolition of the houses because the petitioners had refused to rescind their appeal against the separation fence.

Jerusalem Post reported that Abbas has turned down a request to apologize to Egypt on behalf of the Palestinians for celebrating the assassination of the late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in 1981.

Pakistani PM Shaukat Aziz was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that his country will not engage in normal ties with Israel as long as there is no progress in the diplomatic process between Israel and the PA. Aziz expressed his stupefaction at FM Silvan Shalom's attempts to meet with him at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Jerusalem Post quoted senior Israeli security sources as saying on Sunday that the determination by the UN Security Council that the Sheba Farms area is Syrian and not Lebanese totally negated that pretext that Hizbullah has been using for continuing its terrorist attacks against Israel. On Sunday, Yediot cited a similar statement by Israel's Representative to the UN, Danny Gillerman.

Jerusalem Post reported that a joint Palestinian-Israeli initiative for monitoring media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was launched in Jerusalem on Sunday by the Jerusalem-based Keshev Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel and the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was quoted as saying in an interview with Channel 10-TV over the weekend that Russia is rejecting criticism of its sale of shoulder-held SA-18 missiles to Syria. Putin said: "The weapons do not breach the balance of forces in the region, which we know ... is significantly in Israel's favor."

Ha'aretz reported that Israel and Turkey are currently discussing further security cooperation that would involve the refurbishment of another 48 of the Turkish air force's F-4 Phantoms and some 200-300 M48 Patton tanks belonging to Turkey's armored corps. The newspaper wrote that Turkey is also looking into the possibility of purchasing Israeli-made Harpy UAVs. The deals could amount to USD 1.5 billion.

All media reported on the death on Saturday night of celebrated satirist Ephraim Kishon.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Exemplary order was maintained at [Sunday's anti-disengagement] demonstration, which was restrained and disciplined."

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Behind the series of [settler] protests, which have been held one after another in recent months, are calculated individuals trying to terrify the Prime Minister and the general public."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "Iran has a different agenda from that of Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "An Orange Evening"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 31): "The disagreement is over, but the struggle is not. It is being waged on two levels. The one is public, and involves an attempt to enlist the Israeli street's support so as to force Sharon at the last moment to hold either a referendum or early elections and, by so doing, to delay the evacuation and maybe kill it. The other is surreptitious, and it involves an effort to create a traumatic public atmosphere that will bog down the government and the political establishment in advance of future withdrawals.... Exemplary order was maintained at [Sunday's anti-disengagement] demonstration, which was restrained and disciplined. This may have been the last such demonstration. The closer the date of evacuation comes, the stormier, the more threatening the demonstrations will be. [Likud Knesset Member] Ehud Yatom, the pardoned Shin Bet agent from the bus number 300 affair [in which he was accused of killing two captured prisoners], quoted from the podium the famous [Hebrew] song about the little girl who stood up and asked: Why?... It was impossible not to invoke the Holocaust survivor Miriam Yahav, who stood up last week in Auschwitz and, in front of all the leaders of the world, asked that very same question: Why? Why? With all due understanding for the settlers' pain and for the political calculations of their supporters, everyone ought to bear in mind the difference between the one why and the other. The difference is enormous."

II. "Trauma Made to Order"

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 30): "Behind the series of [settler] protests, which have been held one after another in recent months, are calculated individuals trying to terrify the Prime Minister and the general public.... Those who interpret the crisis of evacuation in terms of national trauma are the settlers. Those who create the conditions that will lead to a violent confrontation are the settlers. Those who equate the evacuation with sacrilege are the settlers. And they have a reason for their behavior: They seek to equate the evacuation to a disaster of such proportions that it must be stopped at all costs, and if it is to be - that no one will ever think to repeat the act in other parts of the whole Land of Israel [i.e. Israel and the territories].

III. "The Familiar Headlines"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (January 31): "There is no doubt at all that a decisive majority of the Israeli public wants to see the elected Palestinian leadership turning over a new leaf and taking part in the elimination of all elements of terrorism, but we have already seen Palestinian police changing their uniforms and joining every one of the militant terrorist organizations, and also exploiting their position in order to support terrorism in every possible way. Iran has a different agenda from that of Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen. All the intelligence

agencies say that Iran's proxy murderer Hizbullah is trying to sabotage the understandings between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and a senior military source said there is still no change in the level of hostilities in the Gush Katif area, according to Hatzofe reporters.... Moreover, 'hudna' is only a ceasefire, and there is no guarantee that the period of quiet will not be exploited by Hamas and Islamic Jihad to step up their arms production and to improve its weapons.... Nasrallah's arrogant declaration that he intends to abduct Israeli civilians to expedite the release of prisoners, has encouraged the terrorist organizations to operate against Israel, especially since they are guaranteed appropriate remuneration. It is dangerous to be optimistic about the terrorist organizations, and it is to be hoped that the heads of the intelligence agencies will keep their eyes open and will not be deluded by the wishful thinking of politicians, even if they have long experience in getting to know the enemy."

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**12. Iraq:**  
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Summary:  
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Expert on Iraqi affairs Dr. Ofra Bengio wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The true test of democratic development in the long term will be at two crossroads: when concrete power sharing begins, and after the pullout of the U.S. and its allies."

Middle East affairs commentator Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: " Israel has nothing to expect from a Shi'ite-fundamentalist regime [in Iraq]."

Block Quotes:  
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**1I. " For Iraqis, True Test Still Ahead"**

Expert on Iraqi affairs Dr. Ofra Bengio wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (January 31): "It should be remembered that those 'free' elections are being held under the watchful eyes of no less than 30,000 troops; in the past, when the Western eyes disappeared, the entire democratic structure collapsed. Furthermore, the small turnout among Sunnis could push them even farther into the political margins, and cause them to make more radical moves in order to nip democracy in the bud. Finally, the true test of democratic development in the long term will be at two crossroads: when concrete power sharing begins, and after the pullout of the U.S. and its allies.... In spite of everything, no one disputes one fact: the historic makeover ... is irreversible."

**II. "Saddam Hussein Is Turning in His Jail"**

Middle East affairs commentator Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 31): "This morning, the Arab world is waking up to a new reality in Iraq, and, no less important, in the Arab world itself.... Iraq's fate will be determined in coming days. If the Shi'ites, backed by the Kurds, start a 'new order' at the expense of the proud, defeated Sunnis, the country could slide into a civil war. If the Shi'ites demonstrate maturity and generosity, and embrace the Sunnis in a future regime, there is still hope for that large, despondent country.... Israel has nothing to expect from a Shi'ite-fundamentalist regime. Should a civil war start in Iraq, that country would be busy with itself for a few years, but there would be no warming of relations with Israel. In a better scenario, the new regime would ignore Israel."

KURTZER